

Appendix 4: 2006 Standard Operating Procedures for Bait-Trapping and Removal of Excess Horses from the PMWHR

A. GENERAL:

The Bureau of Land Management will contract with a private party to capture, by bait-trapping only, and remove selected wild horses from the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR). The PMWHR is located within southern Montana and Northern Wyoming (39,651 acres within Carbon and Big Horn Counties). The methods employed during this capture operation will be bait-trapping wild horses using mineral and/or protein blocks in a temporary trap of portable panels at specified locations throughout the designated PMWHR and/or adjacent lands. After capture in the trap, all horses will be sorted with only selected individuals (as determined in advance by the BLM) being removed.

The Contractor will be responsible for the care of captured horses and the transport of removed animals to the Britton Springs Administrative Site and corral facility at the base of the Pryor Mountains in Big Horn County, Wyoming. The Contractor shall furnish all labor, supplies and equipment necessary to accomplish this work. There will be some BLM personnel involved in these efforts, primarily in terms of identifying individual animals and handling animals at Britton Springs. The work shall be accomplished in a timely, safe and humane manner and be in accordance with the provisions of 43 CFR Part 4700 and the following specifications and provisions.

The Pryor herd currently consists of a total of 135 adult horses and 24 yearlings. All horses are known and catalogued as individuals by the BLM every year. An estimated 12 bachelor stallions (4-8 years of age) and 12 yearlings (an even mix of males and females) have been determined by BLM to be excess and are identified for trapping and removal in 2006. This population control is necessary in order to reduce herd size to nearer the appropriate management level (AML) of 105 adult horses. Fertility control has been used on this herd for 6 years and will continue in 2006 but is outside the scope of this contract.

B. SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS OF GATHER: The specific work to be performed shall include the following parameters:

a. Bait-trapping methods for humane capture wild horses or burros:

This effort requires the bait-trapping form of wild horse capture methods. Although helicopter-drive trapping has been used successfully in the PMWHR, this year approximately half of the wild horses identified as excess are bachelor stallions that have historically avoided helicopter removal efforts.

This method involves setting up a trap of portable panels which is baited with mineral and/or protein blocks and employing a self-closing gate with a triggering device. It will be

necessary to set traps in areas of known wild horse distribution as well as accessible to the Contractor. It will be necessary to place enticements in the traps over a period of time to habituate the target animals to the bait. Multiple traps may be set and in operation during the same period of time. The principal limitation of this method is that forage must be limited or the bait must be more desirable than the surrounding forage. These conditions are possible during late summer and/or early fall on the PMWHR.

Temporary capture traps would be constructed in a fashion to minimize the potential for injury to wild horses and personnel. Gates would be wired open at all unmanned trap sites, and would be left closed only when needed to hold horses inside. All traps "set" for capture must be manned at all times. Capture activities may happen day or night. Night-trapping activities are subjected to the same requirements and standards related to the welfare and safety of wild horses and personnel.

All animals shall be transported from temporary trap sites within a maximum of 8 hours after capture, unless prior approval is granted by the COR/Authorized Officer for unusual circumstances. Trapped horses would not be held inside the traps for a period exceeding 8 hours, unless provided with feed (certified weed free hay or substitute as approved by the COR/Authorized Officer) and water. Animals shall not be held in temporary traps on days when there is no work being conducted except as specified by the COR/Authorized Officer. All temporary trap materials would be promptly removed following completion of trapping at a particular site.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and/or Wyoming Game and Fish would be notified as soon as possible if any wildlife became injured during capture operations. Wildlife caught inside traps would be released immediately.

Injury rates for wild horses subjected to capture and removal, using national livestock Contractors, have been documented at a minimal (<5% of total animals gathered) level. Minor injuries, however, such as cuts and scraps, are generally unavoidable on horses gathered and/or trapped on rugged terrain. Major problems, such as broken limbs and/or fatalities, are expected to be avoided with bait-trapping efforts.

Only animals designated for removal from the range (as determined by the BLM in advance of trapping activity) will be transported to the Britton Springs Administrative Site and corral facility. Upon delivery of captured horses to the Britton Springs, injury rate and other aspects of the capture operation will be evaluated. If it is determined that the risk associated with injuries is significantly greater than expected (see above), trapping efforts will be halted until rectified. Any final decision to alter capture methodology will lie with the Field Manager, BiFO.

b. Description of the work area, maps, and time frame of effort:

The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) is located in the southeastern portion of Carbon County, Montana and extends into the northern portion of Big Horn County, Wyoming (information available at <http://www.mt.blm.gov/bifo/whb/index.html> or by contacting BiFO). The range is approximately 13 miles north of Lovell, Wyoming. The PMWHR

was created in 1968 by order of the Secretary of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall. This designation was the first of its kind in the United States, and directs that management of the wild horses be within a balanced program, which considers all public values without impairment to the productivity of the land. Henceforth this area has been administered for the protection and management of wild horses, wildlife, watershed, archeological, recreational, and scenic values.

Trapping will be restricted to the PMWHR and immediate adjacent federal lands. Harems of wild horses occupy 3 fairly distinct geographic areas of this range including Burnt Timber Ridge (BT), Sykes Ridge (SY), and the Dryhead (DH-Bighorn Canyon National Recreational Area, National Park Service {BCNRA,NPS}), and as such, bait-trapping efforts will focus on specific areas of the range at a time. Some harems and bachelor stallions can also be found seasonally on adjacent Custer National Forest (FS) lands within the higher elevations. BLM will seek permission from the Custer National Forest and National Park Service in order to set up temporary traps or perform any trapping-related activity within their lands. Any and all off-road activities will be minimized to the extent possible.

The Pryor herd currently consists of a total of 135 adult horses and 24 yearlings. All horses are known and catalogued as individuals by the BLM every year. An estimated 12 bachelor stallions (4-8 years of age) and 12 yearlings (an even mix of males and females) have been determined by BLM to be excess and are identified for trapping and removal in 2006. From June to late September, the majority of the herd is distributed in the upper elevations of the range (see Appendix 2). Some animals identified for removal are located within the lower elevations. In general, most horses are relatively easy to locate during this time period.

Trapping may not be conducted 6 weeks on either side of peak foaling season, or from April 1 to June 30, to reduce the chance of injury or stress to pregnant mares or mares with young foals. However, placement of portable corral panels would be permitted during foaling season to allow wild horses to become accustomed to them. It is expected that active trapping will commence on or near July 1 and continue, if necessary, through September as weather permits. All trapping must be completed by September 30, 2007. The BLM will conduct an adoption of excess horses upon completion of all trapping efforts.

c. Responsibility and lines of communication:

The Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) and/or Authorized Officer, Linda Coates-Markle, State Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Mt/Dks, or other individuals selected at the time of preparation of the task orders, have the direct responsibility to ensure the Contractor's compliance with the contract stipulations. The Field Manager will be the primary contact to coordinate with the COR/Authorized Officer to ensure animals are being captured, handled and removed in a safe and humane manner. All individuals involved in the bait-trapping operations will keep the best interests of the animals at the forefront at all times.

The COR/Authorized Officer shall have the means to communicate with the Contractor at all times. Government provided VHF/FM portable two-way radios may be used. The Contractor shall be responsible for the security of all Government Furnished Property. If communications are ineffective, the Government will take steps as necessary to protect the

welfare of the animals. Radio frequency (ies) used for this contract will be assigned by the COR/Authorized Officer prior to any trapping activity.

All incidents/accidents occurring during the performance of any delivery order shall be immediately reported to the COR/Authorized Officer. The contract specifications require humane treatment and care of animals during trapping and removal operations. These specifications are designed to minimize the risk of injury and death during and after capture of the animals. The specifications will be vigorously enforced.

d. Presence or absence of wilderness areas:

Three BLM wilderness study areas (WSAs), containing approximately 23,000 acres, exist within the boundaries of the PMWHR including Pryor Mountain, Burnt Timber Canyon and Bighorn Tack-On. In addition, sections of Lost Water Canyon (USFS recommended wilderness and Research Natural Area) and the Bighorn Canyon National Recreational Area (BCNRA, NPS) are contained within horse range boundaries. Certain activities are restricted within these areas including off-road vehicle use.

Maps and information will be provided to the Contractor that clearly demarks appropriate boundaries and operative restrictions. All temporary trap materials would be promptly removed following completion of trapping at a particular site. The Contractor is required to use and leave each site in such a condition that “wilderness values are not impaired”. This requirement will be evaluated by the COR/Authorized Officer.

e. A description of the gather area(s):

The timing of the bait-trapping efforts will determine the general location and daily movement of the horses within the range. During mid to late summer, the majority of the horse herd can be found in the upper elevations of the range (see Appendix 2) within easy access of forage and nearby water reservoirs. Higher elevations consist of sub-alpine type meadows mixed with heavily wooded areas and canyons. In general, most horses are relatively easy to locate during this time period. Inclement weather conditions influence horse activity such that animals are leaving the high elevations of the range (~8000 feet) by late September.

Some animals identified for removal are located year-round within the mid to lower elevations. This habitat varies from a mix of mountain shrub country with steep-sided canyons to open red desert flats with low shrubs. Due to the high level of BLM ground monitoring of the herd from May through October each year, reasonably accurate information on the location of individual harems will be available to the Contractor. Most bachelor stallions are also sighted several times during the summer period.

Vehicle access to the PMWHR is restricted to open roads (see Appendix 2). The loop roads within the range (Burnt Timber Ridge and Sykes Ridge roads) are very rugged wilderness-type roads and are not accessible with a horse trailer. However, the Crooked Creek road to the west of the range, and the East Pryor road which accesses the north end of the PMWHR are dirt roads but generally better maintained and accessible with a horse trailer. Estimated mileage from

the upper elevations of the horse range to the Britton Springs corral facility is 26-30 miles one-way. Access into the east side of the PMWHR and the BCNRA is excellent via a paved road. Mileage from the north end of this area to Britton Springs is 13-15 miles.

f. Estimated number of animals to be captured, removed and held:

An estimated 12 bachelor stallions (4-8 years of age) and 12 yearlings (an even mix of males and females) have been determined by BLM to be excess and are identified for trapping and removal in 2006. All animals to be removed are identified with unique individual colors and markings. The identification of the individual horses must be verified by the BLM before an animal is transported to Britton Springs.

It is anticipated that all yearlings will still be with natal harems during the summer and fall season. Average harem size on the Pryors ranges from 5-6 animals. Most yearlings targeted for removal are located in different harems and thus approximately 60-70 animals will need trapping and handling in order to remove the designated yearlings. Some bachelor stallions (4 year olds) may still be with a harem but most are found either as individuals or in small bachelor groups, although this is highly variable.

Trapping operations should not negatively impact wild horse harem composition. If foals or other young animals become separated from their harems, the Contractor must make every effort to remedy the situation.

It is anticipated that the trapping and removal of individual horses may take a maximum of three (3) months. Horses designated to stay on the range will be sorted out and released from the bait-trap as soon after capture as possible. It is imperative that stress and injury to the wild horses are minimized during sorting and loading procedures within the temporary traps. No unauthorized personnel may either be in the immediate vicinity or assist with these activities.

All captured and removed animals will be transported to Britton Springs by truck and trailer. The BLM will provide certified weed free hay for all horses being held at Britton Springs. The BLM will provide for veterinarian inspection of all horses delivered to Britton Springs.

Adoption preparation activity of horses (by the BLM) will commence as soon as most trapping efforts are completed. All horses transported to Britton Springs may be subjected to blood draws for both genetic and health studies and will be freeze-marked, vaccinated for domestic horse disease, and de-wormed. BLM personnel, APHIS veterinarians, and/or the project veterinarian may handle these efforts.

g. Temporary trap site selection:

Horses may be located within all elevations of the range and may require multiple temporary capture trap sites. Multiple traps may be set and in operation during the same period of time. All temporary trap locations must be approved by the COR/Authorized Officer prior to construction. Standard operating procedures in the sighting and construction of traps will avoid adverse impacts from trap sighting, construction, or operation to wildlife species, including

threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

Each trap site will be selected after determining the habits of the animals and observing the topography of the area. The Contractor, with the BLM's approval, within a general pre-selected area, may recommend site-specific locations. Trap sites will be located to cause as little injury and stress to the horses as possible. The Contractor may also be required to change or move trap locations as determined by the COR/Authorized Officer.

Trap sites will be located to cause as little damage to the natural resources of the area as possible. Sites will be located near existing roads when possible. Operations will not take place when conditions are so wet that excessive and irreparable resource damage will occur.

Prior to setting up a trap or temporary holding facility, the BiFO, BLM will conduct all necessary clearances (archaeological, T&E, etc.). All proposed site(s) must be inspected by a government archaeologist or equivalent. Once archaeological clearance has been obtained, the trap or temporary holding facility may be set up. Said clearances shall be arranged for by the COR/Authorized Officer.

If possible, traps would be constructed so that no riparian vegetation is contained within them. Impacts to riparian vegetation and/or running water if located within a trap (and available to horses) would be mitigated by removing horses from the trap immediately upon capture. No vehicles would be operated on riparian vegetation or on saturated soils associated with riparian/wetland areas.

Wherever possible, traps would be constructed in such a manner as to not block vehicular access on existing roads. All traps and holding facilities not located on BLM land must have prior written approval of the agency and/or landowner.

h. Trap requirements:

All traps and holding facilities shall be constructed, maintained and operated to handle the horses in as safe and humane manner as possible and be in accordance with the following:

Traps and holding facilities shall be constructed of portable panels, the top of which shall not be less than 72 inches, but preferably 78 inches high, and the bottom rail of which shall not be more than 12 inches from ground level. All temporary traps and holding facilities shall be designed to minimize stress and injury to the wild horses. The proper operation, service and maintenance of all Contractor furnished property is the responsibility of the Contractor.

Finger gates may be constructed of materials such as, juniper poles, etc., only with the prior approval and direction of the COR/Authorized officer has been obtained. All trigger and/or trip gate devices must be approved by the COR/Authorized prior to capture of animals

If applicable, temporary wings shall not be constructed out of barbed wire or other materials injurious to animals and must be approved by the COR/Authorized Officer. Wings may be constructed along existing fence lines, at the discretion of the COR/Authorized Officer,

only if the barbed wire or other wire fencing material is removed from the fence posts and laid on the ground for the length of the wing, or if portable panels are placed along the inside of the fence to protect the animals from injury from fence wire. In this case, the panels must then be covered with either jute or plastic snow fence to facilitate viewing and further reduce possible horse injury.

If applicable, all loading chute sides shall be fully covered with plywood (without holes) or like material. The loading chute shall also be a minimum of 72-78 inches high. All runways shall be of sufficient length and height to ensure animal and personnel safety. Runways may be covered with plywood, burlap, and plastic snow fence or like material and placed a minimum of 1 foot to 6 feet above ground level for horses. All crowding pens and all gates leading to runways may, if necessary to prevent injuries from escape attempts, be covered with a material which prevents the animals from seeing out (plywood, burlap, snow fence etc.) and should be covered a minimum of 2 feet to 6 feet above ground level. If required, eight linear feet of this material shall be capable of being removed or let down to provide a viewing window.

All pens and runways used for the movement and handling of animals shall be connected with hinged self-locking gates.

No permanent fence modification will be made without authorization from the COR/Authorized Officer. The Contractor shall be responsible for restoration of any fence modifications which are made.

Animals held for 8 hours or more in the traps shall be provided good quality hay (or substitute as approved by the COR/Authorized Officer) at the rate of not less than two pounds of hay per 100 pounds of estimated body weight per day. Any hay used must be certified as weed-free and any remaining hay must be completely removed from the area. Due to the unnecessarily high protein content, straight alfalfa hay is not acceptable. If horses are held in the traps, a continuous supply of fresh clean water at a minimum rate of 10 gallons per animal per day will be supplied. Water troughs shall be constructed of such material (e.g. rubber, rubber over metal) so as to avoid injury to animals.

It is the responsibility of the Contractor to provide security to prevent loss, injury or death of captured animals until delivery to final destination.

i. Treatment of injured or sick animals; disposition of terminal animals

The Contractor/COR shall restrain sick or injured animals if treatment is necessary. An APHIS or contract veterinarian may be called to make a diagnosis and final determination. Euthanasia shall be done by the most humane method available. Authority for humane destruction of wild horses (or burros) is provided by the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, Section 3(b)(2)(A), 43 CFR 4730.1, BLM Manual 4730 - Destruction of Wild Horses and Burros and Disposal of Remains, and is in accordance with BLM policy as expressed in Instruction Memorandum No. 2006-023.

The COR/Authorized Officer will determine if injured animals must be euthanized and

provide for the euthanasia of such animals. The Contractor may be required to dispose of the carcasses as directed by the COR/Authorized Officer. State sanitation laws provide for the disposition of animal carcasses at the local landfill, but it is ecologically more appropriate for the carcasses to be subjected to natural decomposition on the range.

The carcasses of the animals that die or must be destroyed as a result of any infectious, contagious or parasitic disease will be disposed of by burial to a depth of at least 3 feet. The carcasses of the animals that must be destroyed as a result of age, injury, lameness, or noncontagious disease or illness will be disposed of by removing them from the capture site and placing them in an inconspicuous location to minimize visual impacts. Carcasses will not be placed in drainages regardless of drainage size or downstream destination.

j. Motorized equipment:

All motorized equipment employed in the transportation of captured animals shall be in compliance with appropriate State and Federal laws and regulations applicable to the humane transportation of animals. The Contractor shall provide the COR/Authorized Officer with a current safety inspection (less than one year old) of all tractor/stock trailers used to transport animals to final destination.

All vehicles shall be in good repair, of adequate rated capacity, and operated so as to ensure that captured animals are transported without undue risk or injury.

Only stock trailers with a covered top shall be allowed for transporting animals from trap site(s) to holding facilities. Sides or stock racks of transporting vehicles shall be a minimum height of 6 feet 6 inches from the vehicle floor. Trailers less than 40 feet shall have at least one partition gate providing two (2) compartments within the trailer to separate animals. The compartments shall be of equal size plus or minus 10 percent. Each partition shall be a minimum of 6 feet high and shall have at least a 5-foot wide swinging gate.

All vehicles used to transport animals shall be equipped with at least 1 door at the rear end of the vehicle, which is capable of sliding either horizontally or vertically. The rear door must be capable of opening the full width of the trailer. All panels facing the inside of all trailers must be free of sharp edges or holes that could cause injury to the animals. The material facing the inside of the trailer must be strong enough, so that the animals cannot push their hooves through the sides. Final approval of vehicles to transport animals shall be held by the COR/Authorized Officer.

All surfaces of the stock trailers shall be clean and disinfectant used to eliminate the possibility of disease transmittal from previous animals in the trailers prior to any transport of the wild horses under this contract.

Floors of vehicles, trailers, and any loading chutes shall be covered and maintained with suitable materials sufficient to prevent the animals from slipping.

Animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle or trailer shall be as directed by the

COR/Authorized Officer and may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament, and animal condition. The minimum square footage per animal is as follows: 11 square feet per adult horse (1.4 linear foot in an 8 foot wide trailer); 6 square feet per foal (0.75 linear foot in an 8 foot trailer).

The COR/Authorized Officer shall consider the condition and size of the animals, weather conditions, distance to be transported, or other factors when planning for the movement of captured animals. The COR/Authorized Officer shall provide for any brand and/or inspection services required for the captured animals.

The Contractor shall schedule shipments of animals to arrive at Britton Springs in coordination with the COR/Authorized Officer. No shipments shall be scheduled to arrive on Sunday and Federal holidays, unless prior approval has been obtained by the COR/Authorized Officer. Animals shall not be allowed to remain standing on trucks while not in transit for a combined period of greater than two (2) hours.

Communication lines will be established with personnel involved in off-loading the animals to receive feedback on how the animals arrive (condition/injury etc.). Should problems arise, capture methods, transport methods and/or separation of the animals will be changed in an attempt to alleviate the problems.

If the COR/Authorized Officer determines that dust conditions are such that animals could be endangered during transportation, the Contractor/BLM will be instructed to adjust speed and/or use alternate routes.

Periodic checks by the COR/Authorized Officer will be made as animals are transported along dirt roads. If speed restrictions are in effect the Authorized Officer will at times follow and/or time trips to ensure compliance.

k. Safety:

Safety of BLM employees, Contractors, members of the public, and the wild horses will be given primary consideration. Risk management procedures including job hazard analysis will be done by BLM prior to the initiation of any trapping activity.

A briefing between all parties involved in the trapping efforts will be conducted on every day that successful trapping and transport of wild horses occurs.

All BLM personnel, Contractors and volunteers will wear protective clothing suitable for work of this nature. BLM will alert observers of the requirement to dress properly.

l. Public relations plan pertaining to trapping activity:

In an effort to facilitate media and public interest and attention towards the wild horse trapping and removal activity, BLM management will schedule public viewing periods of any horses held at the Britton Springs Administrative Site. Up-to-date information on trapping and

removal efforts would be made available to the public by calling the Billings Field Office.

Due to the unpredictable and sensitive nature of bait-trapping in remote-locations, scheduled viewing of the actual trapping activities in the field by the public and media is unlikely. However, if opportunities are possible, and at the discretion of the Contractor, the public must adhere to guidance from the Contractor and BLM and any viewing must be monitored by the BLM. In these instances, the Contractor and BLM will assure that members of the public are in safe observation areas before commencing work activities.

Due to the minimally-intrusive nature of bait-trapping, management does not expect to close any areas of the horse range at any time during these efforts. If the Contractor has concerns that members of the public are interfering with bait-trapping activities, emergency closures within the PMWHR may be considered.

A summer and early fall scheduling of the bait-trapping of wild horses should mitigate, if not eliminate, most conflicts with mule deer and bighorn sheep hunters on the PMWHR.

Trapping within the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area will be coordinated through the National Park Service.